

A Methodological Framework for Developing Pre-Service English Teachers' Competence in Vocabulary Instruction

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Abstract: This article proposes a methodological framework for developing pre-service English teachers' competence in vocabulary instruction. The framework conceptualizes lexical pedagogical competence as the integration of lexical-linguistic knowledge, didactic decision-making, task design, classroom mediation and reflective assessment. It is organized into four interconnected components: diagnostic-target, content-analytical, procedural-practical and assessment-reflective. The paper synthesizes established vocabulary research, teacher-cognition findings and recent form-focused instruction research to specify observable teacher actions.

Keywords: Pre-service English teachers, vocabulary instruction, lexical pedagogical competence, methodological framework, microteaching, reflective assessment.

Introduction: The professional preparation of English teachers requires an explicit lexical-pedagogical dimension. Presidential Resolution No. PQ-5117 identifies the quality of foreign-language instruction and the professional development of language teachers as strategic priorities in Uzbekistan [1]. At the same time, international proficiency frameworks place increasing emphasis on flexible interaction, mediation and the purposeful deployment of linguistic resources [2]. These expectations make vocabulary instruction a high-leverage component of teacher education: learners cannot participate fully in reception, production or interaction if lexical resources are insufficient, yet lexical growth depends substantially on the quality of teachers' selection, explanation, recycling and assessment practices.

A central problem is that general lexical proficiency does not automatically generate vocabulary-teaching competence. A pre-service teacher may possess a relatively large vocabulary and still design inefficient word lists, over-explain meanings, neglect collocations, provide insufficient retrieval, or fail to connect new lexis with communicative goals. Nation's description of word

knowledge as involving form, meaning and use illustrates the complexity of what teachers need to notice and make learnable [3]. The teacher must determine which dimensions deserve attention at a given moment and which can be developed through subsequent encounters. This is a pedagogical judgment rather than a purely linguistic judgment.

Teacher cognition provides a second theoretical foundation. Macalister's work demonstrates that pre-service teachers bring assumptions about vocabulary teaching into their training and that these assumptions influence instructional behaviour [4]. If methodology courses only present principles, existing beliefs may remain largely intact. Effective preparation should therefore create iterative cycles in which student teachers articulate a rationale, enact it in a teaching episode, examine learner response and revise the design. The proposed framework treats such cycles as the central mechanism through which declarative methodological knowledge becomes procedural professional competence.

The framework defines lexical pedagogical competence as the capacity to analyse lexical demands, select and

sequence lexical content, establish form-meaning-use connections, design opportunities for retrieval and transfer, mediate learner difficulty, and evaluate lexical performance using evidence. This competence is organized into four interconnected components. The first is diagnostic-target: identifying learner needs, proficiency level, communicative objectives and lexical gaps. The second is content-analytical: analysing frequency, usefulness, polysemy, morphology, pronunciation, collocation, register and likely learning burden. The third is procedural-practical: choosing semanticization techniques, building practice, integrating vocabulary with skills and managing classroom interaction. The fourth is assessment-reflective: collecting evidence of receptive and productive learning and redesigning instruction accordingly.

The diagnostic-target component prevents vocabulary work from becoming textbook-driven. Pre-service teachers learn to ask what learners need to do with language before deciding what words to teach. A target task may require describing a process, comparing alternatives, explaining a cause, giving instructions or discussing an educational issue. The student teacher then identifies the lexical set that is essential for task completion and distinguishes it from words that can be glossed or left for incidental learning. This prioritization is consistent with research arguing for balanced vocabulary programs that combine deliberate learning with rich exposure [5; 6].

The content-analytical component operationalizes the multidimensional nature of lexical knowledge. Each target item is analysed through a compact lexical profile: spoken and written form, core meaning in the current context, one or two high-value collocations, relevant grammatical behaviour, word-family relationships and register restrictions when necessary. Student teachers compare profiles and decide which information should be taught explicitly. The purpose is not to teach every dimension at once. Rather, the analysis supports selective attention and helps the future teacher anticipate errors such as unnatural word combinations, incorrect complementation or inappropriate formality.

The procedural-practical component is built around a four-phase lesson logic: encounter, clarify, retrieve and transfer. During encounter, learners meet the target

item in a meaningful context. During clarify, the teacher uses a concise technique appropriate to the item: visual representation, example, definition, contrast, translation, word formation or corpus-informed collocation. During retrieve, the learner must produce or recognize the item without full support. During transfer, the item is required in a new sentence, interaction or text. Webb and Nation emphasize the importance of repeated and varied lexical processing; this sequence converts that principle into a teachable design routine [6].

Task design within the framework is informed by the Involvement Load Hypothesis. Hulstijn and Laufer showed that tasks differ in the extent to which they create need, search and evaluation, and that higher involvement can support retention [7]. Pre-service teachers therefore learn to analyse whether a vocabulary activity demands meaningful lexical decision-making. Copying a definition may involve little evaluation, whereas choosing the best word for a specific communicative intention, comparing collocations, or using a target item to defend a position requires deeper processing. Task difficulty is increased through purposeful lexical choice rather than through unnecessary complexity.

Recent research on integrated form-focused instruction strengthens the case for planned attention to lexical form within communication. Wei and Li report durable vocabulary benefits when form focus is incorporated into meaning-oriented instructional sequences [8]. In the proposed framework, this is reflected in short teacher interventions during or after communicative work. If learners repeatedly misuse a collocation or word form, the teacher briefly isolates the pattern, contrasts alternatives and immediately returns it to use. Pre-service teachers practise deciding when such intervention is justified and how to keep it proportionate to the communicative objective.

The assessment-reflective component distinguishes between learner lexical outcomes and teacher instructional performance. Learner evidence may include recognition, controlled production, collocational accuracy and spontaneous use in a new context. Teacher evidence includes appropriateness of lexical selection, clarity of semanticization, quality of retrieval practice, balance between support and independence, and responsiveness to observed

difficulty. A short rubric can combine these dimensions during microteaching. Each student teacher receives peer and instructor feedback tied to specific evidence rather than to general impressions.

Implementation of the framework is organized around repeated microteaching cycles. In cycle one, student teachers analyse a text or task and prepare a lexical profile. In cycle two, they design a ten-minute vocabulary sequence and predict learner problems. In cycle three, they teach peers, while observers record evidence. In cycle four, they compare intended and actual learner responses. In cycle five, they redesign one part of the sequence and explain the change. This structure makes reflection concrete because it is anchored in observable teaching decisions. It also enables methodology instructors to assess progress across time without relying on a single final lesson.

Local scholarship on the preparation of future English teachers increasingly emphasizes the integration of linguistic and professional competence [9]. The present framework adds specificity by defining what lexical-methodological readiness looks like at the level of teacher action. A student teacher who can discuss vocabulary principles but cannot select teachable items or create retrieval opportunities has not yet demonstrated operational competence. Conversely, a student teacher who can justify choices, anticipate lexical difficulty, create a coherent form-meaning-use sequence and revise instruction after evidence demonstrates a more advanced level of professional readiness.

The framework also has curriculum implications. Vocabulary pedagogy should not be concentrated in a single lecture. Lexical analysis can be embedded in courses on methodology, speaking, reading, teaching practice and assessment. Students can maintain a lexical-teaching portfolio containing word profiles, task designs, microteaching observation sheets and reflective revisions. Such cumulative evidence makes developmental progression visible. It also encourages student teachers to view vocabulary instruction as a planned strand of language education rather than as an incidental activity that occurs whenever an unfamiliar word appears.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, lexical pedagogical competence should

be treated as an explicit outcome of pre-service English teacher education. The proposed diagnostic-target, content-analytical, procedural-practical and assessment-reflective components provide a structured basis for developing that competence. Their integration through lexical analysis, task design, microteaching, evidence-based feedback and redesign can strengthen the connection between vocabulary research and classroom practice. The framework does not prescribe one universal vocabulary technique; instead, it prepares future teachers to make principled decisions about selection, semanticization, retrieval, communication and assessment in relation to specific learners and instructional goals.

A further dimension of the framework is corpus-informed noticing. Pre-service teachers do not need advanced corpus-linguistic expertise, but they should be able to consult reliable concordance examples or learner dictionaries when intuition is insufficient. Short evidence sets can reveal frequent collocates, typical grammatical frames and register differences. The pedagogical skill lies in reducing this information to teachable evidence. Instead of presenting a concordance screen to learners without guidance, the future teacher selects three or four examples and asks a focused noticing question. This procedure helps student teachers distinguish personal intuition from usage evidence and supports more accurate lexical explanations.

The framework also requires attention to sequencing across lessons. Vocabulary instruction is weakened when each lesson functions as an isolated lexical event. Student teachers therefore create a recycling map showing where target items reappear after initial teaching: in a listening text, a discussion prompt, a short written reflection, a quiz or a later project. Such mapping operationalizes the principle of distributed encounters and makes lexical planning visible. It also encourages future teachers to differentiate between initial learning and consolidation; the first lesson establishes a usable representation, while later encounters deepen speed, precision, collocational control and contextual flexibility [6].

For assessment, a four-level analytic rubric can be used. At the emerging level, lexical selection is largely unprioritized and explanations dominate. At the developing level, target words are selected

appropriately but retrieval and transfer remain limited. At the proficient level, the teacher links form, meaning and use, creates repeated retrieval and integrates vocabulary with communicative activity. At the advanced level, instructional choices are adapted responsively to learner evidence and followed by principled redesign. The rubric should be used formatively across several microteaching cycles rather than as a one-time judgement. This makes the development of lexical pedagogical competence observable and supports targeted feedback.

The proposed framework is conceptual and requires empirical validation in different teacher-education settings. Future research can examine how student teachers progress across the four components, which microteaching features produce the strongest changes in pedagogical reasoning, and how methodological readiness transfers to school practicum. Such validation should combine performance rubrics, lesson-plan analysis, stimulated recall and evidence from actual learner lexical use. The value of the framework lies in offering a testable structure: its components and indicators can be operationalized without claiming that one vocabulary technique is universally superior.

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